



Envision Arlington Diversity Task Group

Date: March 9, 2023

Time: 6:45 pm - 9:00 pm (official meeting start at 7PM)

Remote Participation, via Zoom: <https://town-arlington-ma-us.zoom.us/j/85713651797>

Agenda (times are approximate)

1. **Land Acknowledgement, Review of Mission Statement and Group Meeting Protocols (5 mins.)**
2. **Presentation and discussion with Erica Schwarz, Director of the Housing Corporation of Arlington (45 mins.)**
3. **Review of February meeting minutes (5 mins.)**
4. **Discussion re: having future hybrid meetings (5 mins.)**
5. **Discussion re: offer from Equitable Arlington to present to us on the MBTA Communities initiative (5 mins.)**
6. **Update / discussion on the process of selecting the DTG representative to the Arlington Civilian Police Advisory Commission (ACPAC) (20 mins.)**
7. **Continued discussion on the direction and strategy of DTG, including the role of the DTG chair and the process for selecting a new chair (30 mins.) - POSTPONED to our 3/30 meeting**

Minutes

Present: Rebecca Gruber, Katell Guellec, Erica Schwarz, Laurie Key, Jennifer Lewis-Forbes, Michele Oshima, Jane Flores, Lynette Culverhouse, Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Sarah Mckinnon, Mona Mandal

Presentation by Erica Schwarz, Director, Housing Corporation of Arlington (HCA)

- Work is divided into three areas: affordable housing (currently 150 units); social services for family stability; and civic engagement to raise the voice of low-income families.
- 70 units are in buildings with between 2-9 units

- Also new buildings on Broadway (Arlington EATS on first floor) and Lowell Street in the Heights
- 10 Sunnyside Ave (Broadway) will be a new development (43 units); energy efficient; with community space
- Affordable = Below 60% of the area median income (AMI). Currently all rentals.
- Working to build community among residents and supporters. Tenant councils will be formed to enable residents to have more of a voice.
- Walk for Affordable Housing returns this year to raise money, but no requirement to donate funds. It is 3 miles and will include a shorter segment. Sunday, May 21, 12-3, starts and ends at Robbins Memorial Garden. Music, food, etc. A website page will be set up for people who want to fundraise.

Questions for Erica

- What is the connection between HCA and Section 8?
 - HCA is a non-profit, and Section 8 vouchers are a public government program. Someone can use a Section 8 voucher for an HCA unit. In Downing Square (48 units), 25 units are rented using a publicly-funded voucher.
 - Arlington Housing Authority issues vouchers, but currently approximately only 1/3 are being used in Arlington due to high rents here.
- Can people let you know about possible buildings that the Housing Corp could purchase?
 - Yes! Always interested to know about anything out there.
- Do you support a warrant article to introduce an overlay so that certain zones would qualify for 100% affordable housing?
 - The Arlington Redevelopment Board with the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) is currently considering a warrant article that addresses this issue.
 - A resolution was submitted in this April's Town warrant re: an overlay district:
 - ARTICLE 67 RESOLUTION/AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVERLAY To see if the Town will vote to adopt a resolution affirming affordable housing overlay districts; or take any action related thereto. (Inserted at the request of Guillermo Hamlin and ten registered voters)
 - This resolution was discussed at the Select Board's 3/6/23 meeting—when available you can watch the video of the meeting to listen to the Select Board's discussion and hear their vote.
 - There is also an article regarding building affordable housing by right:
 - ARTICLE 32 ZONING BYLAW AMENDMENT/BUILD AFFORDABLE HOUSING ANYWHERE To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Bylaw so developments of 100% affordable housing may be built by right in all zones, with lower requirements as

well; or take any action related thereto. (Inserted at the request of Thomas J. Perkins and ten registered voters)

- This article will be coming before the Redevelopment Board at their 3/13/23 meeting for discussion and possible vote.
- What kind of services do you provide and to whom?
 - These are available to all, not just tenants!
 - Emergency funds: moving expenses, rental deposits, etc. This is for those at risk for homelessness
 - Help for signing up for benefits like food stamps
 - Basic computer literacy
 - Employment services
 - Other: help people make connections with other services in Arlington; address hoarding concerns; smoking cessation to help meet HCA lease terms
 - Goal is to focus more on civic engagement to get tenants involved, and to find out from tenants what is important to them.
- Do you have family properties and services for kids?
 - Have a lot of kids in units, mix of families and singles. There is a shortage of affordable units large enough for families.
- Other upcoming goals?
 - Strategic planning this year. Two main goals are social services and civic engagement.
- Sense of unhoused people in Arlington?
 - An effort to determine this happened two years ago, but not sure now. HCA does not track this.
 - We partner with Somerville Homeless Coalition to help because we do not have a shelter here. Some of the funding for this comes from an allocation from Arlington's Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds.
 - HCA has a reciprocal partnership with Somerville Homeless Coalition. About 15 units leased to the Coalition and vice versa.
- Are pets allowed?
 - Yes, many tenants do. Erica isn't sure about what the exact terms of the lease agreement are, but HCA does allow it, and will work to align that with the lease document.

February Meeting Minutes

- Correction to Margaret Credle Thomas's name and title
- Minutes were approved

Future of Hybrid Meetings

- Person running the meeting has the burden of getting there early and leaving late
- Hard to get past the convenience of Zoom for many's attendance at DTG meetings
- Ideas: Experiment over summer with in-person only?
- Ideas: Pre-register so if no one is coming in person then Zoom meeting only?
- This may be part of the larger discussion about the future of DTG
- Question: How do we keep inclusivity and also maintain connection?

Proposal from Equitable Arlington to present to us on the MBTA Communities initiative

- Equitable Arlington is a group of our neighbors very interested in housing issues
- For DTG to express their opinions and provide input to the MBTA Communities discussion, it might work better for DTG to hold a “meeting in a box.”

Update on Arlington Civilian Police Advisory Commission Nomination Process

- A smaller group within DTG has been meeting to develop our process
- Met with Jill and Theresa from the Town DEI office. Theresa said she would help with outreach strategies.
- Unclear if the Town will post something on their website about the openings for this commission.
- Not currently under a time deadline. At some point they will announce a 90-day countdown to make nominations.
- Reviewed the process that was used for DTG’s appointment to the Study Committee. We do have a process that hasn’t been problematic in the past, and includes evaluating candidates through the lens of DTG.
- We want someone who will encourage change and not be satisfied with the status quo. This will take some creativity.

Other Business

- Discussion of Margaret Credle Thomas’s letter to Arlington Public School staff re: the murder of Tyre Nichols.